

**Virginia Cave Board
Saturday, December 3, 2005
Shenandoah County Government Center, Woodstock, Virginia**

Virginia Cave Board Members Present

Ms. Barbara L. Moss, Chairman
Dr. David C. Culver
Ms. Andrea Futrell
Mr. Roger Kirchen
Ms. Judy Molnar
Ms. Nikki Rovner
Ms. Claire Ward

Virginia Cave Board Members Not Present

Mr. Bob Barns, Treasurer
Mr. Joe Davis
Mr. Drew Harrison
Dr. John R. Holsinger
Mr. Tom Lera

DCR Staff Present

Mr. Joey Fagan
Mr. Larry Smith
Mr. Wil Orndorff
Ms. Carol Zokaites

Others Present

Dr. Denny Casey, Virginia Museum of Natural History
Mr. Gary Moss, National Speleological Society
Mr. Bobby Clark, Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension, Shenandoah County
Ms. Janet Tinkham, Cave Conservancy of the Virginias

Call to Order

Ms. Barbara Moss called the meeting to order at 1:25 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

Introduction and Announcements

Ms. Moss welcomed members, staff, and guests.

Ms. Moss expressed thanks on behalf of the Cave Board to Ms. Janet Tinkham and the Front Royal Grotto of the National Speleological Society for hosting the Virginia Cave Board and to the Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension Service for providing the meeting room.

Mr. Larry Smith expressed regrets on behalf of Mr. Bob Barns, Mr. Joe Davis, and Dr. John Holsinger. Ms. Moss expressed regrets on behalf of Mr. Tom Lera, who had arrived home later than expected due to flight delays. Mr. Joey Fagan expressed regrets on behalf of Mr. Drew Harrison.

All in attendance introduced themselves.

Election of Officers

Members of the Board nominated the following slate of officers:

Claire Ward, Chairman
Andrea Futrell, Vice Chairman
Bob Barns, Treasurer

MOTION: Ms. Moss moved that the slate of officers be accepted.

SECOND: Dr. David Culver seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from March 19, 2005

MOTION: Ms. Judy Molnar moved that the minutes of the March 19, 2005 meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved as written.

SECOND: Ms. Nikki Rovner seconded

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurers Report

The treasurer's report was submitted to the Board for Mr. Bob Barns.

Old Business

Education and Outreach Committee

Ms. Moss outlined plans for the 2006 Cave Week. Educational resources to be developed include a “We’re All Ears” Bat Box, PowerPoint Presentations on cave and karst topics for distribution on compact disks, printed resources, templates for suggested Cave Week Events and Activities, and a list of speakers who are available to talk on cave and karst related topics.

A spring kick-off prior to the summer tourist season will help the show caves in Virginia to better plan activities for the October observance of Cave Week. A professional development workshop to be held in late spring will help the show caves, and other interested organization, to better plan activities for the October observance of Cave Week. Carol Zokaites, Karst Education Coordinator, will coordinate the activities for the professional development workshop. Ms. Moss outlined plans to update and expand the Virginia Cave Board Website. The possibility of posting minutes from past Cave Board meetings on the site was discussed. It was suggested that a brief biographical statement be posted on the website where Board members could summarize their personal background and interests relative to the work of the Cave Board.

Ms. Andrea Futrell reported on the status of the Cave Owners Newsletter. Draft copies of the soon to be published Cave Owners Newsletter #16 were circulated to those in attendance. Mr. Wil Orndorff discussed plans for printing and distributing the newsletter to Virginia cave owners during December 2005.

Joint Technical Committee

Ms. Futrell said that a letter is being sent to Mr. Joe Maroon, Director of DCR, to request that he meet with members of the Cave Board to discuss ways to better protect caves and karst groundwater resources through improved stormwater management practices and regulations.

Ms. Futrell said that a response to VDOT and VTRC from the Cave Board and DCR Karst Program is being written that expresses serious concerns with reference to the Virginia Transportation Research Council report entitled “Highway Runoff in Areas of Karst Topography.”

Ms. Futrell expressed a need by the Board to establish a simple, but well-defined process to accommodate the writing of letters by the Cave Board. Ms. Futrell volunteered to write up a process for efficient letter writing and submit to the board for review.

Ms. Futrell stated that the Sinkhole Protection Committee (now a part of the Joint Technical Committee) of the Cave Board recognizes the need for a comprehensive examination of laws, regulations, and policies that pertain to caves and karst and identify existing gaps and problems. It is suggested that by mid-year 2006 efforts be initiated to inform landowners about cave and karst related issues that are of concern.

Ms. Futrell reported on a letter that was recently sent to Ms. Lou Ann Johnson of the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission expressing concerns about potential environmental problems and health issues associated with the proposed water line system in Rye Cove, Scott County, Virginia.

MOTION: Ms. Futrell moved that the Chair contact Ms. Lou Ann Johnson of the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission to arrange a meeting between members of the Virginia Cave Board, the LENOWISCO PDC, DCR Staff, and Scott County elected representatives to discuss karst issues in the Scott County.

SECOND: Dr. David Culver

DISCUSSION: Scott County contains highly sensitive karst areas such as the Rye Cove Karst. It is important that community leaders be aware of the environmental and health problems that are likely to occur if inappropriate land use is permitted to occur in certain high risk areas.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Karst Program Report

Mr. Wil Orndorff reported on recent work by the DCR Karst Program.

Karst Program Staff participated in the Virginia/West Virginia Growing Communities on Karst Workshops, held in Shepherdstown and Lewisburg, West Virginia.

Two new wage employees have joined the Karst Program Staff. Bill Balfour and Josh Rubinstein will be working on the ongoing project to develop Conservation Site Boundaries for Virginia's Significant Caves.

Karst Program Staff has made several visits to Fallen Rock Cave to access potential impacts and help develop strategies to minimize impacts due to construction of the Jewell Ridge Natural Gas Pipeline for Duke Energy. A cartographic survey was conducted in the cave in cooperation with Schnabel Engineering to determine depth from pipeline to known cave passage.

Karst Program Staff has visited Ogdens Cave and Blue Spring, the site of a proposed municipal water withdrawal by Fredrick County.

Karst Program Staff will continue to provide information to the public regarding availability of funding to clean out old sinkhole dumps through the Agricultural Sinkhole Protection BMP (WQ-11). A sinkhole cleanout using the WQ-11 BMP is planned sometime in early 2006 at Rufe Caldwell Cave in Craig County.

Karst Program Staff visited the site of the proposed Luray Landing Development. Concerns were expressed by Mr. Robert Graves of Luray Caverns regarding potential impacts to cave and karst resources by stormwater from the proposed development.

Karst Program Staff participated in and presented papers at the 2005 National Speleological Society Convention in Huntsville, Alabama and the 2005 National Cave and Karst Management Symposium in Albany, New York.

Karst Education Report

Ms. Carol Zokaites reported on the educational activities of the DCR Karst Program. Ms. Zokaites has conducted six Project Underground Workshops in Virginia and three workshops outside of the state at several conferences during the past year. She arranged and led the weeklong Chesapeake Bay Mountain Region Academy, sponsored by the Virginia Resource Use Education Council, which was held at Washington and Lee University in August 2005. Ms. Zokaites presented a program on "Topographic Maps and Karst Watersheds" at the 2005 Virginia Association of Science Teachers Conference held in Roanoke in November 2005. She also assisted in DCR's educational outreach efforts at the Virginia State Fair and with Earth Day activities.

Future plans include holding a Project Underground Facilitator Training Workshop at Douthat State Park on March 1 and 2, 2006. Other work will include production of a Bat Informational Brochure and work on 2006 Cave Week.

Blue Spring and Ogdens Cave

Mr. Orndorff reported on the proposed withdrawal of water from Blue Spring by the Frederick County Sanitation Authority for use as a municipal water supply. The proposed water withdrawal from the spring would likely result in severe environmental consequences for Buffalo Marsh Run as well as Ogdens Cave, a biologically significant cave located downstream in the same watershed. Preliminary analysis of the hydrological data by DCR staff suggests that it would not be possible to withdraw the proposed amount of water from Blue Spring without unacceptable environmental consequences, including direct impacts to a globally rare cave beetle species and to the Appalachian Springsnail (*Fontigens bottimeri*), a species that is being considered for legal protection. The Cave Board will prepare a letter to the Virginia DEQ expressing concerns about the proposed water withdrawal and associated environmental concerns.

Luray Landing Development

Mr. Orndorff reported that Karst Program Staff visited the site of the proposed Luray Landing Development. Concerns were expressed by Mr. Robert Graves of Luray Caverns regarding potential impacts to cave and karst resources by stormwater from the proposed development.

WQ-11 Agricultural Sinkhole Protection BMP

Mr. Orndorff reported that state funding is now available for the various Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices. Efforts are underway to generally inform Virginia landowners about available Cost-share and tax credit opportunities through the program. The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice Cost-Share Program is funded through the state Water Quality Improvement Act, and administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. An excellent opportunity exists for Virginia landowners to receive funding and state tax credits to help clean out old trash dumps from sinkholes and cave entrances located on their farms. The Agricultural Sinkhole Protection BMP (WQ-11) will pay 75% of the cost of debris removal, paying up to \$2,500.00 to the cooperator. In addition to the cost-share payment, the program allows for a tax credit of “25% of the total eligible cost not to exceed \$17,500.00.” Sinkholes with streams that flow into them are given priority under the program. There was a consensus among the Board that Virginia Landowners with sinkhole dumps on their property should be encouraged to apply for the WQ-11 BMP through their local Soil and Water Conservation District Offices.

Committees Structure and Organization

Chairman Ward and Ms. Moss announced that the committee structure of the Virginia Cave Board should be changed to better utilize the time available for committee work. In the future, existing committees should be considered as subcommittees under either the Education and Outreach Committee or the Joint Technical Committee.

MOTION: Ms. Moss moved that Cave Board Committees be consolidated into one of two standing committees at the discretion of the chair. The two standing committees will be the Education and Outreach Committee and the Joint Technical Committee.

SECOND: Ms. Molnar

DISCUSSION: The Education and Outreach Committee will include the Education Subcommittee, Open Caves Subcommittee, and Cave Owners Newsletter Subcommittee. The Joint Technical Committee will include the Environmental Response Subcommittee and the Sinkhole Protection Subcommittee

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Cave Board Show Caves Contacts

Ms. Moss discussed who are the current Virginia Cave Board show cave contacts. Mr. Tom Lera will be asked to serve as the contact person for the cave in Cumberland Gap National Historic Park. The current Cave Board show cave contacts are:

Dixie Caverns (Ernst Kastning)
Crystal Caverns at Hupp's Hill (Nikki Rovner)
Cumberland Gap National Historic Park Caves (Tom Lera)
Endless Caverns (Claire Ward)
Grand Caverns (Judy Molnar)
Luray Caverns (Joe Davis)
Natural Bridge Caverns (Bob Barns)
Natural Tunnel State Park caves (Andrea Futrell)
Shenandoah Caverns (Andrew Harrison)
Skyline Caverns (Joe Davis)

Grand Caverns

Ms. Molnar announced that during 2006, Grand Caverns celebrates their 200th year of conducting tours. Grand Caverns was designated as a National Natural Landmark in November 1973. The caverns will be dedicating a plaque that acknowledges their status as a National Natural Landmark. The Spring VAR, one of two meetings held each year by the Virginia Region of the NSS, will be held at Grand Caverns on April 28, 29, and 30, 2006.

Electronic Meeting Rules

Mr. Larry Smith will research what the rules are that govern electronic meetings by State Boards.

Set Next Meeting Date

The next meetings of the Virginia Cave Board will be held on April 22, 2005 at the Virginia Program Office of The Nature Conservancy in Charlottesville, Virginia.
PLEASE NOTE: THE TIME AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT CAVE BOARD MEETING HAS BEEN CHANGED TO APRIL 29, 2006 AT THE GROTTOS TOWN HALL.

Adjournment

Ms. Nikki Rovner moved the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Judy Molnar seconded. Ms. Ward adjourned the meeting at 3:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire A. Ward
Chairman

Joseph H. Fagan
Secretary